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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Christianity;

Its past struggles—its present position—its future prospects:

AN

ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY AT UNION COLLEGE

ON

SABBATH EVENING, JULY 25, 1847.

BY REV. EBENEZER HALLEY,
SALEM, N. Y.

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ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN:

Permit me to congratulate you as aspirants to the sacred office. Instead of seeking distinction through the crooked mazes of political adventure, or acquiring riches in the labors of commercial enterprise, you have chosen the better part in a voluntary dedication of the future energies of your being, to advance the glory of God and the welfare of your species. May your lives be preserved to enter on its holy functions; may you be baptized with the living fire of the divine spirit, purifying and consecrating you to his service; may his influences abundantly accompany your ministrations without which the most burning eloquence and most perspicuous exhibitions of truth will be unavailing; and when "well stricken in years," and unfitted for further service here, may the ascending chariot convey you to the church of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem where, associated with patriarchs and evangelists, and the redeemed ones, "they that have turned many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

Although you have not yet commenced a regular course of theological science, yet your preparatory studies in this venerable literary institution, pervaded throughout by Christian influence, must have rendered you conversant with its general principles and character. What Judge Blackstone, with great elegance, affirms of the intimate relations subsisting between the different

departments of science, "that they are of a sociable disposition, and flourish best in the neighborhood of each other," applies with still greater propriety to the harmonious alliance subsisting between these and the Christian revelation. They all, so far as they go, illustrate or establish the religion of the Bible. They sustain the credibility of its fundamental principles, and enhance the value of its peculiar doctrines. They furnish the most valuable contributions to natural religion from the wide and varied aspects of the material universe, which enlarge our conceptions of the infinite majesty and excellence of the supreme Creator, while the melancholy pictures that they exhibit of man before revelation shed its heavenly ray along his path — bewildered by error, agonized by fear and enslaved by vice — are the strongest collateral testimonies to its necessity and importance. The prelections and exercises that have hitherto engrossed your attention in this seat of science are admirable instruments to initiate you into the science of theology. The perusal of the Greek and Roman classics, those imperishable monuments of genius and eloquence and taste, those masterpieces of refined analysis and profound disquisition, must have impressed you with the incompetency of reason, to conduct us to certainty in matters of religion, and the inefficacy of the most glowing declamations upon virtue, when unaccompanied by divine sanctions, to restrain the indulgence of depravity, and renovate the character of society. The departments of mental and ethical science conduct you to the very vestibule of theology; here our speculations embrace the history of a being "noble indeed in reason, infinite in faculties, in action like an angel, in apprehension like a god, the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals," yet at the same time the subject of vicious passions, turbulent appetites, an insatiable craving for some unrealized object of enjoyment, feeling the consciousness of criminality, and a "longing for immortality mingled with the terrors of future retribution," and do not these speculations bring us to the confines of Christianity, and fit us for studying its numerous adaptations to the wants and circumstances of man. The experimental sciences, though devoid of any connexion with revealed religion, yet furnish

us with those conclusive data of our reasoning between cause and effect, which silence the lips of the Atheist, while the striking disclosures which they make of infinite wisdom, power and goodness, exalt our conceptions of the divine character, and of the wonders of divine providence. And when we open the page of history, that comprehensive volume of the past, do not the *res gestæ* of Christianity embrace the history of the civilized world, and form a clue which guides us through all its diversified transactions; for the progress of society, the improvements in the arts and sciences, the intrigues of cabinets, the convulsions of nations, the debasing influence of superstition, or the prevalence of a sound and enlightened piety, (and these form the chief materials of history) are but the records of her conflicts, and partial success in our world. Christianity is the great radical point from which its leading events have diverged, the central spring from which its most remote movements have originated. Contemplate her in the infancy of her existence, when she was extending her influence through the Roman empire, and what does contemporaneous history record, but the ferment of public opinion, the conflicts of Grecian philosophy, the conflagration of Rome, the edicts of emperors, the humanity of Pliny, and the formalities of the Roman tribunal? Or pass we to the age of the Constantines, we are introduced to the bitterness of theological controversies, and the conflicting decisions of councils, the abortive efforts of Julian, the apostate, to restore the observance of Pagan worship, or the keen rivalry between Rome and Constantinople, as to the seat of metropolitan supremacy. Or, if we peruse the history of Mahomet, who in a subsequent age, swept like a tornado with his enthusiastic followers over the east, we must search for his daring and successful policy in the distracted state of the Christian church, and the lamentable ignorance that universally prevailed. Or if we pass to the dark ages in which the human mind was plunged in error and superstition, and scarcely one ray of celestial light shot athwart the profound gloom, we shall find that all its freaks and its follies, its quibbles and subtleties, its sallies of indiscreet enthusiasm, or its outbreakings of unrestrained phrenzy, originated in

mistaken conceptions of religion; whether we advert to the supremacy of Aristotelian logic, or the endowment of monastic edifices, the expedition of the Crusades, or the persecution of the Waldenses. Or finally shall we advert to the era of the Reformation, when the German monk issued from his cloister, and held aloft that mystic volume, whose disclosures electrified and convulsed the nations like the shaking of the dry bones in the valley of vision — here we behold the connexion of Christianity with all the improvements and leading events of the age; the revival of classical literature, the diffusion of knowledge, a greater extension of civil rights, and improvement in moral and social enjoyment. And from the age of Luther to the present period, embracing an interval crowded with heart-stirring events and memorable changes in the state of society, we shall find Christianity intimately interwoven with these, and whether employed as the engine of princely despotism, or the handmaid of sectarian intolerance, or the blessed herald of mercy, that her agency can be recognized in the revolutions, conspiracies, wars, measures of legislation, schemes of social reform, enterprizes of enlarged philanthropy and an insensible, yet powerfully controlling influence in the ordinary transaction of life, like the unseen stream whose existence is known only by the verdure on its banks; yes, and her blessed influence shall continue to pervade every element of society with increasing light and holiness until she reigns over our world with supreme and universal authority. My apology, Gentlemen, for the length of these remarks, is to remind you that your previous studies have considerably paved the way for your entering on the science of theology, and also to impress you with the grandeur and importance of a study, the subjects of which exercise such a mighty influence over the interests and prospects of man.

The subject to which I this evening invite your attention, is one that I have glanced at in these remarks: Christianity, in the three periods of her existence. Her past struggles — her present position — her future prospects. In treating so comprehensive a subject, I must confine myself to a general outline, and seize on the more prominent and leading features of my theme.

I. Her Past Struggles.

I might illustrate these by detailing in a chronological order, her conflicts with Judaism, Heathenism, Mahometanism, Roman Catholicism, and other formidable antagonists. I prefer however, the discussion of it in a more general shape, and shall proceed to illustrate the character of some of the most injurious influences that have conspired to obstruct the growth and prosperity of Christianity.

These I apprehend may be classified under the following heads: 1. The ascendancy of civil power; 2. The pride of human intellect; 3. The claims of assumed merit; 4. The perversion of Christian morality.

1. *The ascendancy of civil power.*—When our Saviour planted his church in the world, he conferred on her an exclusive character and organization: as a spiritual community she recognizes jurisdiction to Christ alone as her supreme head, and conformity to him as her distinctive badge. Her laws, her institutions, her ordinances, her administrations are all spiritual; nor can she suffer these to be amalgamated with the policy of the world, without forfeiting her independence, and debasing her sacred character. "My kingdom," said the Saviour to Pilate, "is not of this world." Like two orbs that roll in harmony in their separate spheres, yet reel and occasion wild disaster, when they approach each other, so the world and the church, however important and useful in their independent positions, no sooner enter into an alliance, and the church submits to secular authority, than her influence is immediately neutralized. The one contemplates time, the other eternity. The province of the one embraces the external actions of men; with motives and the state of the affections, it does not interfere; the great end proposed by the other is the renovation of the soul. The only weapon of the one is force, it has nothing to do with persuasion; the only legitimate weapon of the other is persuasion, or the voluntary surrender of the affections to the influence of truth, it has nothing to do with force; the conduct of her divine master is decisive on this point. At no period of her existence, did his religion appear more urgently to require the

shield of civil protection thrown around her, than in the days of her infancy, when she was assailed by Jewish intolerance and heathen superstition, by the pen of the philosopher, and the sword of the statesman; when the blood of her sons soaked the sands of the amphitheatre, and the burning pile, as it crackled and blazed, robbed her of her most valiant defenders. Could not the divine power, which subdued a Saul of Tarsus, and converted a furious bigot into a zealous apostle, have so overpowered the terrors of Felix and dissipated the suspicions of Agrippa, as to have rendered them in their official stations, the patrons of his religion; nay, as its influence penetrated even into the palace of Nero, could not this atrocious miscreant, have been transformed into a Christian emperor, and then Christianity would have reposed under the wing of legislative protection, and been pampered by the largesses of royal favor; the legions of Cæsar would have been her defence, and the mint of the empire her treasury; the diadem of royalty glittering on her head, and the purple of state-majesty flowing around her shoulders. But her poverty was her riches, her defenceless condition was her best protection. In a subsequent century, however, Constantine incorporated religion with the state, by patronising a particular sect and endowing all its ministers as stipendiaries of the government. This continued to be the practice of the Roman emperors until the removal of the seat of government to Constantinople, where the predominant influence of Rome in the western empire, gradually raised its bishops to the rank of independent sovereigns, whose ambition and policy enabled them to complete that ecclesiastical hierarchy which so long insulted the understandings, and trampled on the liberties of mankind. At the Reformation, when the papal yoke was thrown off by so many countries, this unscriptural principle, so destructive of the rights of conscience and of the supremacy of Christ in his church, was still retained in almost all that embraced the Protestant faith, and is recognized by most European governments at the present day.

A transient glance at some of the more prominent evils of this system is all that we can now attempt. Look at its injurious in-

fluence on the character and institutions of Christianity. The church of Christ is a select community, designed for those, who under a sincere conviction of its truth, have been induced to submit to its jurisdiction. As its spirit and requirements render it incongenial to the depraved heart, and all its rewards point to another world, few if any, will be induced to enter within its pale, but those who have been baptized in its spirit, and enjoy its controlling influence. An elevated standard of duty is thus maintained within the church, which preserves the identity of her spiritual character; her members are isolated from the society around them, her worship and institutions retained in all their original simplicity and purity, so that her altar is the throne of the heart, and her image the beauty of holiness. But look at this church when no longer cradled amid the elements of persecution, it became the *protégé* of the government, and basked in the sunshine of royal favor. It now lost all its essential distinctive features, and became a mere creature of civil policy. Individuals enrolled themselves among its members, as the sure passport to aggrandizement and power; numbers flocked to its temples to offer incense at the shrine of Mammon, instead of the Saviour of men, and thus the line of separation between the church and the world was effectually removed. This was succeeded by an entire perversion of the institutions of Christianity: that simple and artless ceremonial which the Saviour prescribed for his church, was entirely unadapted to her secular character, when she reposed under the shade of worldly power; the magnificent ceremonies of the Heathen temple were interwoven with the unambitious rites of the Christian synagogue; the ingenuity of art and the treasures of opulence were employed to adorn and embellish her, and the Christian church, yoked to the car of the state, succumbed under its secularizing influence, and lost every feature of her spirituality. The " bride the lamb's wife" was now arrayed in the gairish ornaments of worldly distinction; processions and pageants, festivals, lustrations, costly edifices, and a routine of idle and unmeaning ceremonies, were the unhappy fruits to the church of Christ, when she tamely surrendered her independence to

another. Nor less injurious was it to the sanctity of the clerical office. The influence which a distinct order of men, when exclusively devoted to their sacred duties, exerts over society must be immense. Especially when knowledge was chiefly diffused by oral instruction, (and this occupies the greatest period of the Christian church) how necessary was it that its public teachers should be distinguished for their piety, zeal, diligence, and purity. The financial law of the gospel, that they who ministered at the altar, should live exclusively by the altar, constituted an interesting bond between a pastor and his flock, and a powerful stimulus to the faithful discharge of his duties, as it subjected him to the salutary control of public opinion. But no sooner were its ministers elevated to the position of state stipendiaries than they became intriguing, ambitious, worldly minded, panting for preferment, fawning sycophants for the patronage of the great, fomenting conspiracies and insurrections, and often marching, clad in armor, at the head of armies. Their ignorance was melancholy in the extreme: few of them could write, the greater part of them could not read the breviary of their church, and their instructions in public, consisted either of the most absurd legends, or the most violent distortions of scriptural truth. Thus for many centuries the priests lips never "taught knowledge," and their secular character as the minions of royal patronage was one of the chief causes of that melancholy ignorance and superstition that so long overshadowed the Christian world.

And finally, remember, that to this must be traced all those religious persecutions that have stained the pages of ecclesiastical history. If civil government had kept within its appropriate province, in respecting the rights of conscience, and extending alike to all religious sects and parties, its impartial protection, no one could have assumed a lordly control over another. As diversity of sentiment is inseparable from our present condition, there would have been still the jealousies of rival sects, and the din of theological strife, but it would have been a war of opinions, not of force, and after the violence of polemical controversy had spent itself, truth would have been in the ascendant. But when one

particular sect was elevated, its adherents regarded with jealousy and contempt every rival system, and invoked the aid of the secular power to suppress and exterminate them. No weapon could have been more unphilosophical or unscriptural; the mind cannot be coerced, it must be reasoned with; it will yield to the influence of persuasion, not to the terrors of force; you may immure an individual within the walls of a prison, and confine his body in fetters of iron, and exclude him for years from the light of day and the converse of his fellow men, for believing what you deem to be heresy, and after inflicting these severe privations, what have you accomplished? Converted him? No! Caused him to recant his opinions? No! Loosened his attachment to his religion? O no; it only endears it to him the more, and causes him with justice to suspect the validity of that creed that requires to be upheld with the gleam of the bayonet, and the solitude of the dungeon. How disastrous the scenes which this baleful principle has produced in the Christian church! To how many countries can we turn, where this blood-besmeared idol, has made havoc of the saints of God, and converted his heritage into a field of desolate slaughter. Go to the valleys of Piedmont, or the mountains of Switzerland; think of the massacres and carnage in France and Bohemia; read the history of the Netherland converted almost into a desert by the murderous soldiery of the Duke of Alva, and its fields strewed with the bodies of its inhabitants, left to be bleached by the rains, and withered by the winds of heaven; peruse the martyrologies of Scotland and England, embalming the memories of those devoted champions of the cross, that fell, supporting the standard of Zion, and whose last prayer for a bleeding church, rose up to heaven amid the flames and smouldering ashes that surrounded them; go to the inquisition with its subterraneous cells and instruments of torture, and after having striven to count the numbers of those that have thus perished as the victims of religious intolerance, ask in the language of Ahab, " Who slew all these?" and the reply must be, it was a state religion. If all had been impartially protected in their religious opinions, man could never have oppressed his brother. It was this which forged the

chains, erected the scaffold, sharpened the sword, kindled the faggot, drowned the voice of the expiring sufferers, and bereaved the church of some of her best and noblest sons in the defence of the truth.

I have thus attemped to point out the struggle of Christianity, with the ascendancy of civil power, and have illustrated the baneful influence of this, on the purity, and efficiency, and tranquility of the church. Let us rejoice that our favored country is a stranger to the dominant influence of any religious sect, that unfettered freedom of religious belief is the privilege, as it is the birthright of all, and that the various sections of the church of Christ, inspired with a generous emulation to outshine each other in purposes and labors of love, here repose alike under the vine and fig-tree of civil authority, there being none to make them afraid.

2. *The pride of human intellect.*—Nothing would appear *a priori* more improbable, than that a revelation from heaven should be throughout palpable to our comprehension. Is it possible that man, the mere creature of a day, who beats a few pulses, and has leisure only to snatch a passing glance at the economy of nature around him, should be able to comprehend the character and procedure of that infinite, eternal being, whose presence extends to all space, and whose providence embraces all worlds. There would be something ludicrous in an insect endeavoring to study the complex nature of man, classifying his mental and moral faculties, launching into speculations respecting free-will and preordination, and confidently predicating the actions of men from the influence of the motives exhibited to them: here however, notwithstanding the disparity, it would be still one finite being, sitting in judgment on the actions of another; but in the other case, it is finite endeavoring to grasp what is infinite, the child of an hour with the plummet of his feeble experience, desirous to guage the wisdom of him to whom "a thousand years are as one day." Every thing around us in the works of God is replete with mystery. There are limits to the inquisitive mind, in its excursions into the departments of matter or of mind, which declare "hitherto shalt thou come but no

farther." Beyond these, all is shrouded in impenetrable darkness. And if there be depths thus unfathomable, in the works of Jehovah, which we witness, if a globule of water be a microcosm, a little world teeming with wonders, if the insect that sports its little hour in the sunbeam, present materials of study to the most insatiable curiosity, in the structure of its wing, the formation of its eye, and the pulsation of its heart, if we are even ignorant of the nature of that union existing between our souls and our bodies, shall we look for nothing mysterious in the word of God? nothing wonderful in the history of an incarnate Saviour, in his victories over sin, and Satan and the grave, in the influences of his gospel on the understandings and affections of men, in the conflicts which his church has undergone, and in the fulfilment of scripture prophecy by human instrumentality? It has been said with great propriety, that a supernatural revelation without mysteries would be like a firmament without stars, and become a convenient altar for the incense of human vanity.

Infidels object to the Bible, because many of its doctrines are incomprehensible to reason; though we believe this to be only a pretext; for the elementary principles of natural religion, such as the eternity and omnipresence of Jehovah, the existence of moral evil, and the free agency of man with the fixed order of events, are just as incomprehensible to the human intellect, as the doctrines of the incarnation and atonement. Nay, if they are consistent with their principles and exclude whatever is mysterious from a place among the categories of their belief, they must take refuge in atheism itself, and subvert the first principles of all natural science. But Christianity has sustained as much injury from its friends, in the way in which many of them have disposed of its mysteries, as from its avowed enemies. They have applied the principles of philosophy to its doctrines, and endeavored to refine and explain away whatever is incomprehensible to our reason. If these, indeed, could be shown to be *contrary* to reason, we would be at liberty to reject them entirely; for nothing in the revelations of God to his children can be inconsistent with the unbiassed exercise of those faculties which he has implanted

within us; but there may be many doctrines entirely *above* our reason, and these we should implicitly believe instead of rejecting them, or presumptuously trying to simplify them, and reduce them to the standard of our judgment. Had these principles been acted upon through the diversified history of the Christian church, how many disastrous controversies would have been prevented! Let us select for illustration the doctrine of the trinity. Those who hold orthodox sentiments upon this subject, maintain by the authority of scripture, that there are three divine persons in one undivided essence, and though each of them be possessed of the perfections of Godhead, yet there are not three Gods, but there is only one living and true God: although this view of the doctrine neither multiplies unity nor reduces a plurality into one, and therefore exhibits to our faith nothing inconsistent with reason, yet every one must perceive that it is one of those incomprehensible fields of thought that lie entirely beyond the land marks of human inquiry. Yet if we examine ecclesiastical history, we shall find that conflicting opinions upon this subject agitated the church for centuries, nice distinctions were established, party phrases, such as ομοουσιος and ομοιουσιος were banded about, to express the creed of the contending factions; and councils and synods assembled to ratify by their decisions, what must ever continue to be wrapt up in unfathomable obscurity. In like manner, the person of the Messiah, or the assumption of a human nature into union with the divine, has given rise to controversies which have been waged with the utmost keenness. Had mankind bowed implicitly to the teachings of scripture on this subject, no diversity of opinion would have existed respecting it, for it is revealed so clearly "that he who runs may read" it. But the union of a divine and human nature in one person, was regarded as repugnant to the principles of a sound philosophy; and therefore proceeding to cut the knot which they could not unloose, one party rejected his humanity on the ground that his alledged appearances were only illusions on the senses of his apostles, another rejected his divinity by denying that he had any pre-existence before his incarnation in our world, while a third, anxious to combine the two systems,

allows his humanity, and at the same time, that if not divine, yet in his other nature, he is superior to the angels, or the most exalted finite intelligencies of which we can form any conception. The most remarkable illustration of this system at the present day is the Neology of Germany. This demi-infidel theology repudiates every doctrine that cannot be explained on the principles of reason, and studiously excludes from the narrations of scripture, almost every feature of supernatural agency. By its bold assertions, its undevotional spirit, and its reckless interpretation of scripture, it has loosened the reverence for the inspired volume, on the continent of Europe, and tended to cherish a sceptical spirit among all classes of society. Thus, when the sacred writers describe to us the history of Satan, the fallen spirit along with his confederates in rebellion, we are not to understand these as real personages that have any existence, but as bold metaphors, intended to point out the prevalence of depravity in our world. In like manner, the miracles of Christ are attempted to be explained by the influence of secondary causes, and the omnipotent Saviour who had the keys of universal nature at his girdle, degraded, as his acts of mercy pass through the ordeal of their irreverent criticism, by being likened to the dexterity of the manipulist, or the feats of the juggler. Thus has the pride of human intellect operated as a powerful barrier to the influence and reception of the Gospel. Let it be your uniform aim in your future studies, to hold reason ever subordinate to revelation, to make the oracles of heaven the supreme standard of controversy, and to bring down every high thought, and every exalted imagination into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

3. *The claims of assumed merit.*—It is a singular fact which we stay not at present to explain, that the religion of man, in every age, has been of an expiatory character. Not only among more polished states, where a state religion seems a necessary engine of policy,. and where it required only a few slender materials for the poet to construct a beauteous mythology, and the legislator to frame an imposing ritual, but even among those savage tribes, for our knowledge of which we are indebted to the

enterprize of the traveller, or on whose shores the keel of the ship has recently rested, we discover a consciousness of guilt deeply implanted in man, along with the conviction that their deities can only be rendered placable by sacrifices. The character of these was proportioned to the criminality of the offender; sins of the deepest dye could be atoned only by the entire renunciation of property, or by doing violence to the tenderest affections of the soul. This explains the bloody, and often revolting rites in which they engaged; for as they deemed these meritorious in the expiation of guilt, they were anxious to appease their deities by sacrifices of a strictly equivalent value. In the religion of nature, man is the author of his own regeneration — the physician who pretends to heal, and at the same time the patient who is suffering. How different is the religion of Jesus! There man is contemplated as so helpless that he must look for deliverance to the sovereign mercy of God alone, and yet as so important, that his redemption from sin and everlasting condemnation gave rise to one of the most wondrous movements in the annals of the universe, when "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The atonement of the Saviour, as it satisfies the justice and sustains the purity of the divine government, also secures the salvation of all those who believe in him; they have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, and are freely justified from all things. To suppose that any thing supplementary was left to be done on the part of the sinner, would be derogatory to the dignity of the sacrifice, and inconsistent with the professed tendency of the Gospel, which uniformly, by impressing us with a sense of our demerit and worthlessness, traces our deliverance from perdition to the love and mercy of Jehovah. Repentance cannot repair the insult done to violated law, or mitigate its penalty to the offender, nor the most virtuous resolutions be accepted as an equivalent for guilt already contracted. "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ. For by grace are ye saved

through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." This is that blessed doctrine, that irradiates the inspired page as with the brightness of a sunbeam, the theme of prophets and apostles and martyrs, the sure basis of our peace with God, the great vital principle that pervades all the doctrines and precepts and motives and invitations of scripture. A musician would term it the key note of the piece; an artist, the prominent object on the canvass, and the drapery and grouping, all so artfully arranged, as to impart additional effect to the principal figure; and an astronomer as the central orb around which the inferior satelites revolve in their brilliancy and harmony. Yet though a principle of fundamental importance in our religion, a casual reference to the successive stages in the history of the Christian church, will show how much its lustre has been obscured, and its importance attempted to be evaded by the various devices of men. It is a doctrine repulsive indeed to the pride of man, and one of the chief stumbling blocks, that lie in the way of believing the gospel. Accordingly in the infancy of the church, we find the majority of the inspired writers, and especially the apostle Paul, establishing the doctrine of the justification of the sinner in the sight of God, irrespective of human merit, and exhibiting to Jew and Gentile, the fallacy of any other reliance than the righteousness of Christ. No sooner were these lights removed from the church, than their unanswerable expositions of this fundamental principle were forgotten, and the leaven of merit began to appear in every form, according to the habitudes of the individual or the usages of society. It aspired to extraordinary feats of self denial, to superhuman triumphs of mind over the influence of the senses, to rigors, austerities, privations, such as outrage the social feelings of men, and derange the mechanism of society. The martyrs who sealed their testimony with their blood, either at the scaffold or the stake, were contemplated as embalmed amid the odors of holiness; and those who had not the courage, or lacked the opportunity to render a similar testimony, displayed it by their stoical indifference to the indulgencies and appetites of our nature. The rich surrendered their wealth into the possession of the church, the

gay parted with their jewels and assumed the garb of poverty, the active renounced the pursuits of business and spent their days amid stern seclusion, while the most tender relations of life were broken up, and the action believed to be the more meritorious as the sacrifices were painful and self denying. The human mind yielding itself up to every extravagance of feeling, lost sight entirely of the spiritual nature of religion, and of the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of men, and constructed a system of the most puerile and debasing superstition. Religion, instead of breathing the atmosphere of social life, and qualifying its possessor for repelling the temptations, as well as enjoying with moderation the comforts of life, was banished to deserts and cells, where it exhibited itself in acts of abstinence and mortification, painful austerities and revolting privations. To reside under the ledge of the naked rock, or in the midst of the pestilential swamp, to subsist exclusively on the roots and bark of trees, to maintain the body for a length of time in an upright position, or to besmear it with ointment and expose it to the stings of insects under the rays of a vertical sun — to torture it by scourges or impair its energies by want of sleep — were regarded as a sure passport to the favor of heaven. The doctrine of human merit had entirely supplanted the reliance upon the atonement of the Saviour, and left man to eke out his salvation by the suggestions of his own fancy. To this principle we are to ascribe the origin of monastic institutions. An analysis of these would evidently be foreign to our purpose, but it shows how egregiously the principles and spirit of the gospel had been forgotten, when these outbreakings of fanatical zeal were not the mere solitary effusions of enthusiastic temperament, but received the direct countenance of the church, and buildings exclusively appropriated for this use were erected, and different orders, with their appropriate badges and spheres of operation were instituted, and the principle of merit arranged into a complete system, the devotee being incited to extraordinary acts of mortification by the legends of saints and confessors, and taught to rely for the expiation of his guilt on the penances of the church. Nor was it within the cloister, or to those who had renounced all

intercourse with the world, that this principle was restricted; its advantages were accessible to all; the citizen received absolution, by submitting to the exactions of the ecclesiastic, the rapacious baron expiated the sins of a lawless life, by surrendering at his death a considerable portion of his valuable lands to the church. And the doctrine of purgatory, by extending a posthumous dispensation to those whom the hardening process of crime or the graspings of avarice had rendered indifferent to their spiritual interests in this world, and placing it within the reach of the pious solicitude of friends to extricate them from everlasting perdition, reared the capstone on this monstrous evil. Indeed the whole ceremonial of the Roman Catholic church, in its penances, its pilgrimages, the veneration in which it held the memories of departed saints, and the extravagant encomiums it pronounced on monastic life, studiously kept out of view the righteousness of Christ, by thus fostering the pride and presumption of the human heart. Thus during the space of twelve hundred years, a long and melancholy period in the history of man, was this central, all important principle in the Christian institute, the jewel without a compeer, the pearl beyond all price, as effectually displaced from man's worship and creed, as if it had no claim to a place there; and when this sacrilegious act had been performed, the services of the Christian temple became nothing but unmeaning ceremonies; for the deity had fled, and the altar of expiatory sacrifice was overturned, and the appointed way of access into the holy of holies, sprinkled by atoning blood, was barricaded, and the response of a reconciled God from above the mercy seat, and between the cherubim, to his worshipping children, ceased to be heard; and over the atoning sacrifice of the immaculate lamb did man presumptuously erect his own altar, and offer up the smoke of his own vanity and impiety, and insult a holy God by his profane and loathsome services, and become the victim of as fatal a delusion, as during the darkest periods of heathen superstition. You are aware that the indecent and grossly mercenary purposes to which the principle was applied, was one of the chief causes that paved the way for the blessed reformation by Luther. Having

carefully perused the scriptures, he perceived how correct views of this subject furnished the individual with a key to the whole subject matter of revelation. He accordingly termed it "articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ," the article of a standing or falling church: and the churches which have embraced the Reformation, have, with few exceptions, incorporated this doctrine of justification by faith, through the righteousness of Christ, in their standards, and given to it an important place in their ministrations. And it is a truth, not less illustrative of the purifying influences of the gospel, than of the entire accordance of its principles with the philosophy of our nature, that where the doctrine of free grace is faithfully and clearly preached, and its connexion with the glory of God, and influence on the habitudes and graces of the Christian life faithfully exhibited, we always witness a corresponding elevation of character, and inflexible attachment to virtue; while in those churches on the contrary, where these are either entirely set aside by philosophical disquisitions on morality, or assailed by furious invective as unfriendly to the interests of holiness, we find a visible increase of selfishness and crime.

4. *The perversions of Christian morality.*—It is a fact worthy of notice, that infidel writers, with scarcely one exception, have extolled the morality of scripture. However hostile to revelation as a whole, they are charmed with the ethical department of the New Testament; they acknowledge that for purity and elevation of sentiment, Socrates and Seneca must yield the palm of superiority, and that the life of Christ, as drawn by the evangelists is a perfect embodiment of virtue. It is natural to expect that wherever this religion is known, it must exercise a salutary influence on the face of society. No one can compare the state of the world during the purest days of heathen morality, with the age in which we live, notwithstanding its woful degeneracy, without being impressed with this conviction. It is Christianity which has repressed the inroads of licentiousness and abolished the unnatural practices of Pagan institutions, which has softened the atrocities of war and ameliorated the wretchedness of servitude, which has hallowed the social relations of life and converted woman from

the victim of man's brutality and the slave of his passions into his fondly cherished companion, which has advocated man's inalienable rights, whether as an individual or a member of civil society, which has regulated the administration of justice, secured the validity of treaties between different nations, and originated innumerable plans of benevolent effort. Yes, and were she to disappear from the midst of us, much as we may boast of science and law and civilization, the history of the French revolution proves that we should soon sink to a level with savages and assassins. But there are many causes which have obstructed the *indirect* influence of religion on the state of society (for it is of this, and not of its spiritual tendency on the hearts of its professors that we now speak,) and none probably to a greater extent than the numerous perversions of its morality.

One of these is the grossly defective and unscriptural manner in which morality is inculcated, and its leading principles explained in works on ethical science. The scriptures to which we are indebted for our correct perceptions of moral duty uniformly represent virtue or holiness as something immutable and independent of human authority or the sanctions of civil law, as determined in its qualities by the state of the heart and as acceptable only when performed from love to God and regard for his authority. Man is here recognised as a being of moral obligation, and his character in this world as closely identified with his happiness or misery in another. All that is imperative in the authority of the supreme legislator, or melting in the pathos of a Saviour's love, or solemn in the awful disclosures of eternity, are employed to enforce the obligations of duty. While our hearts are warmed with these sublime pictures, if we take up any of the standard writers on moral philosophy, we seem to have passed into another region. There morality is disassociated from all the holy principles with which it is incorporated in scripture, and reduced to a matter of expediency, or the cold abstractions of reason. There is scarcely in any of them an allusion to the Christian revelation; nay, in most of them there is an avowed hostility to the word of God, and an adoption of principles evi-

dently subversive of its authority. In these speculations, instead of flowing purely from the fountain of life, morality filtrates through the depravity of the human heart, by which its purity is corrupted, and its salutary influences impaired. Hobbes for instance, taught that there was no distinction between virtue and vice apart from political enactment; Shaftsbury, that a regard to our own interests ought to be the standard of our duty; Hume maintained that that alone was virtuous, which might be useful to ourselves or others; while Smith resolves our feelings of approbation or the reverse at the conduct of men, into pure sympathy, thus making virtue a mere creature of impulse, the offspring alone of emotions which are to be determined according to the previous habits of the individual, or the state of society in which he moves. Am I wrong in affirming that such speculations must have exerted an injurious influence in counteracting the tendency which the scriptures might otherwise have exerted on the features of society. These were all men of letters; they were the classical authors of their day; their writings abound in brilliant wit and eloquent fancy; they were rudely disseminated among the reading public; they formed for more than a century, the basis of those prelections delivered in colleges, and thus swayed the opinions of those who were afterwards to control the public mind at the bar, in the senate house and in the pulpit. Thus has the indirect influence of the gospel upon society been impaired by ethical systems, calculated to pander to the depraved suggestions of the heart, and the mercenary dictates of self-interest, or the hollow maxims of a bungling expediency have been substituted for the clear and uncompromising requirements of the law of God.

Having thus considered some of the past struggles of our holy religion, permit me to illustrate,

II. Its Present Position.

There is a strong tendency among men to overrate the importance of the times in which they live. They suppose that their age must stand out in a prominent position from all the preceding, and that those elements are then in motion which are to enlighten

our species and stereotype the features of society on all coming times. Hence they are disposed to contemplate passing events through a magnifying medium; their heroes are giants, their years eras, and their occurrences crises in the history of the world. This is more especially the case, if after society has enjoyed an unusual period of tranquility, it becomes suddenly agitated and convulsed to its centre, like the river which after gliding smoothly along, at last dashes over the precipice in the broken and foaming cataract. We hope to be preserved from a delusion which sanguine minds are so prone to indulge. We disregard alike the dreams of optimists and the speculations of political economists, believing that Christianity is the only effectual panacea for the disorders of society, and that the importance of events should be estimated only by the influence which it exerts, and the extent to which it is diffused. Without being chargeable with enthusiasm, we may consider the *present position* of our religion as more auspicious than almost any in its past history, and leading us to cherish the most delightful anticipations of the future. Let us shortly glance at a few of its features.

It is an age distinguished by the acknowledged *discomfiture of infidelity*. Where are the boasted successors of Bolingbroke, Shaftsbury and Hume? Has another champion arisen possessed of the brilliant wit of Voltaire or the splendid diction of Gibbon? When the works of these authors successively appeared, there were individuals who favored their suppression by civil authority, from the apprehension that the interests of religion would be endangered by the sophistry and wit with which it was attacked. It was a groundless, unholy, and pernicious fear. Error alone has reason to recoil from investigation, truth only becomes the more impregnable the longer it is assailed. How strikingly is this verified in the deistical controversy! The speculations of these writers called out for the defence of Christianity a host of advocates unrivalled for their profound learning, powerful reasoning and philosophical analysis—the Lelands and the Lardners, the Warburtons, the Paleys, the Watsons, who have demolished entirely the arguments of their opponents, and

laid the controversy forever at rest. No writer of eminence now, has the audacity to throw down the gauntlet as the advocate of infidelity, and no individual now, unless he wishes to be loathed and shunned, would claim any affinity to this philosophical school. Genius is no longer viewed as the necessary ally of scepticism, nor a professed belief in the doctrines of the cross, as the indication of a feeble intellect. The truth need not be diguised — infidelity has been worsted, her weapons are spent — her master spirits have fled — her surviving assailants have not the courage to muster afresh — every mode of attack, whether covert or avowed, has been fruitless, and the citadel of truth occupies as secure and impregnable a position as ever. What mightily contributed to hasten the fall of infidelity, was the horrors of the French revolution, which, by disclosing the legitimate influence of its principles, caused even its abettors to look on that fearful tragedy with dismay, while it roused the friends of truth to renewed exertions for the extension of Christianity as the parent of virtue, and the most effectual safeguard against the perils of anarchy and the inundation of crime.

It is an age distinguished by its increasing reverence for the scriptures as the *sole standard of religious controversy.* Names have exerted a most disastrous influence in the Christian church. Those eminent men who wrote in defence of its doctrines, or became founders of particular sects, not only received the gratitude of their contemporaries, but have, contrary to what their own wishes would have dictated, wielded a despotic authority over the judgments of posterity. They were elevated to the rank of aristarchs in theology, and their opinions were regarded as entitled to implicit belief. The disciples of Plato and Pythagoras scarcely cherished a more superstitious reverence for their founders, or received the peculiar tenets of their schools with more unhesitating confidence. The question was not, is it contained in the scriptures, but was it taught by St. Augustine, or Chrysostom, by Calvin or Whitby; is it embodied in the Westminister Confession of Faith, or the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England. These days are happily passing away. The supremacy of names

is on the wane, and among all classes of Christians there is a more distinct recognition of the principles and authority of the gospel; the Bible is now more generally appealed to as the only standard by which all religious controversies should be determined. The opinions of fathers, the decrees of synods, the authority of creeds, are recognised only as they harmonize with the word of God. The oracles of heaven, and not the fallability of human reason, are the test by which error is to be detected, the fan to separate the elements of orthodoxy from heresy, the crucible to the powerful agency of which every speculation is to be subjected, and truth to be disengaged, undiminished, and unalloyed. What delightful results on the peace and prosperity of the Christian church, may we not speedily anticipate from this new order of things. One of these is already visible in the improved method of interpreting scripture. Expositors, who formerly repaired to the inspired volume to find out arguments for defending their particular system were not likely to arrive at "the mind of the spirit of God." Their minds were biased, and under this influence they controlled the testimony of scripture like the heathens, who often compelled their oracles to speak in their favor. Under the impulse of a heated fancy, they opened the Bible much like the individual in a reverie, who gazing on the glowing embers of the fire, or the undulations of the fleecy cloud, imagines that he sees embattled armies and turretted cities. Allegories were strained and twisted till some novel truth was elicited which had escaped all previous criticism; a parable was grossly perverted to establish the dogma of some particular sect; the watchwords of party strife, or the mottoes that were engraven on their banners, were the language of scripture, distorted and employed as the badges of faction. Thus like the Jewish rabbies, who often discovered the most profound mysteries of religion in the arrangement of single letters or syllables, how often have the scriptures been made to teach the fancies and opinions of men. But these "idola specus" as Lord Bacon would designate them, are disappearing before the march of divine truth, like the floating masses of clouds before the influence of the sun. Scripture is now inter-

preted by the laws of a sound and enlightened criticism. Parties, instead of fencing round their opinions with the authority of eminent names, are testing them upon their coincidence with the word of God. The simple and satisfactory compass within which all theological controversies are settled is this: are these points contained in the word of God, then they must be true; are they at variance with it, then they must be false; or are there no references to them in the scriptures, then they may be either true or false, but the subject at issue is no matter of faith, and no part of religion. In the increasing prevalence of this sentiment over the Christian, do we see what will for ever terminate those struggles which religion has been doomed to encounter, and which we illustrated under a previous division of our subject. For if civil establishments of religion be the mere institutions of human policy, and none save their most bigotted advocates claim for them any other authority, they will speedily be removed as a piece of useless and cumbrous machinery in the framework of the Christian church; the pride of human intellect will be checked in proportion as the supremacy of revelation is acknowledged, the love of merit will give place to luminous statements of evangelical truth, and the perversions of the morality of scripture will find an appropriate antidote in the increasing reverence for the Bible, which, wherever it is diffused, elevates the standard of public sentiment and the tone of public feeling, and exercises an indirect influence over every department of duty, and every class of society.

It is an age distinguished by increasing *liberality of sentiment among the various sections of the Christian church.* This is a necessary consequence of the principle which we have already illustrated; for in proportion as the scriptures are venerated, as the only standard for determining truth, will the importance of sectional differences disappear, and the acrimony of controversy be diminished. In what a distracted condition the church of Christ has long existed. As we peruse its past history we seem to be reading the transactions of various independent communities, whose interests were opposite, and

whose existence incompatible with the peace and prosperity of each other; and in the bitter jealousies awakened by the rivalry of faction, and in the unscruplous means employed to attain to aggrandizement and triumph, giving but slender evidence that their master and interests and duties were one. From the beginning it was not so. In the days of the apostles, when differences of sentiment appeared in the church, they inculcated the duty of mutual tolerance on subjects not involving the fundamental doctrines of religion. The same pleasing proofs of Christian liberality existed after the reformation; Protestants felt themselves to be bound together by a community of interest and affection. The churches of Holland, Germany, Switzerland, France, England and Scotland, maintained unbroken harmony of intercourse, and delighted to hail each other as belonging to the fellowship of the saints. The refugee from the continent found shelter in the bosom of the British churches, was welcomed to the table of the Lord, and if a minister in his native land, was admitted into the pulpits, even of York and Canterbury. An adequate certificate bore its possessor in the full enjoyment of communion, over the wide extent of reformed Christendom. But as unfettered discussion gradually gave rise to a wide variety of sects, jealousies were enkindled, the subjects of controversy swelled into indefinite importance, and their adherents not only shunned all intercourse with each other, but indulged in uncharitable motives and grossly contemptuous language. Each party intrenched itself behind its own ramparts and refused to coöperate with others in efforts of piety and Christian benevolence, unless they could subscribe the articles of a creed and hosannah the shibboleth of a party. This was arrogant as well as uncharitable. For the Bible is a book of general principles, confining our attention chiefly to the leading facts and doctrines of religion. Had it gratified our curiosity upon every subject connected with that boundless field into which it introduces us, and of which natural religion furnishes us no intimation, such as the modes of subsistence in the divine essence, the introduction of moral evil, the ranks and offices of angels, the mysteries in the book of providence, the influence of the scheme

of redemption on other orders of beings in the universe, and the minute details connected with the legislation of the Christian church, "the world itself would not have contained the volumes which might have been written." A uniformity of sentiment therefore becomes necessary as a bond of union among the disciples of the Saviour, only respecting those doctrines that are clearly revealed; but where there are others, that must be deduced by inference, or not revealed with so much precision, but that conflicting sentiments can be conscientiously entertained respecting them, they should call forth the candor and forbearance of the different branches of the church of Christ. To this delightful consummation the church is rapidly approaching. What an advance has been made within the last half century. The asperities of party have been smoothed down, the members of different churches are cultivating feelings of affection and forbearance to each other, and rallying as a common bond of union, around those subjects in which they agree; instead of wasting their efforts in sectional and desultory movements of benevolence, they are concentrating their energies against the empire of Satan. We contemplate ministers of different denominations, members of the same committee, advocating the diffusion of the gospel, on the same platform, and the Christian world in all its movements receding farther and farther from the narrow prejudices of sectarian intolerance. What a rich and refreshing illustration of this was recently exhibited in the metropolis of the British empire, at the convocation termed "the Evangelical Alliance." There we behold assembled, the representatives of the orthodox churches in both hemispheres of our globe, some of them encountering the perils of the ocean during a long voyage, and others travelling hundreds of miles by land, speaking different languages, belonging to churches widely differing in doctrinal statement, worship and legislation, and yet these men of eminent talents and piety, and sagacity, do not regard the attempt, in the present age, visionary or impracticable to fuse into one concentrated mass the separate portions of the church, and speedily realize the prayer of our Saviour, "That they may be one even as we are one. I in them

and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." May the celestial dove speedily descend with the olive branch as an indication that the waters of strife have subsided, and the golden bow of the covenant, as it encircles within its embrace all the sections of the Christian church, become the blessed pledge of the reign of truth and love to her remotest borders.

The last feature of the present age, which we shall adduce, is the *efforts that are making for the extension of Christianity.* This is a prominent and delightful characteristic of the times in which we live. Little more than fifty years have elapsed since the church awoke to her duty in reference to the heathen world, and when the scheme was first announced, it was contemplated as one of the most Quixotic expeditions that had ever busied the heated imagination of a speculative philanthropist. It was branded with the stigma of fanaticism, and attempted to be demonstrated as impracticable on the principles of sound deduction, for it was alledged that the countries were so unhealthy that none but a native could subsist there, that the inhabitants were ignorant as the beasts and fiercer than the lions that prowled in their forests, that they were so volatile that no courtesy could gain their attention, or so devoted to their superstitions that they would never renounce them, that their languages were so rude in their orthography that they could never be susceptible of arrangement, and so difficult to pronounce, that none but a native could speak them. With these and similar objections was the benevolent enterprise of evangelizing the world assailed in its infancy. And now look at the results. How signal its success, how almost miraculous its triumphs. "Its line is gone through all the earth, and its words to the ends of the world." It has penetrated into regions which the Roman eagle, at the head of victorious armies never approached, reclaimed wandering savages, whom philosophy in her tender mercies left hopelessly to perish on the banks of the Ganges and on the shores of the Caspian, dispelling the shades of superstition, and abolishing the reign of legalised and degrading vices, converting the beautiful isles of the Pacific, where man existed, brutified by ignorance,

and steeped in pollution, into the lovely abodes of civilization and piety, and even in frozen Greenland, and in hearts colder than their clime, is its benign influence triumphing, and the sun of righteousness arising with healing under his wings. These zealous movements have been accompanied by equally energetic and enlightened measures for the promotion of true piety at home. The religious education of the young, the diffusion of spiritual instruction through the publication of elementary treatises on the doctrines of the gospel, or through the medium of instructive and attractive narratives, the numerous subdivisions of the schemes of Christian benevolence in adaptation to the circumstances of our species, and the facility with which knowledge finds a path to the most inaccessible districts by the system of colportage, all stamp the present age as second in importance only to the apostolic, and lead us to regard it as the speedy harbinger of a brighter day, when all shall know the Lord, and his name shall be glorified.

Such are some of the distinctive features of Christianity in her present position. May we not exclaim, "Blessed are our eyes for they see, and our ears for they hear." It was the complaint of Milton that "his lot had been cast in evil days." With no conceivable propriety can any such complaint be advanced, by any individual now, who desires to consecrate his talents and energies to the truth as "it is in Jesus." The wide field of Christian labor is open, society is stirred up from its inmost depths, the great drama, composed of such interesting events, and for which so many persons in different ages of the world have been summoned on the stage, is nearly drawing to a close, and happy is he, who in these favorable circumstances, embarks his energies in the blessed cause of diffusing the knowledge of divine truth. But this leads me to contemplate,

III. Its Future Prospects.

Uncertainty may be safely predicated of every sublunary object. How unstable are human systems and governments; theories at one time extravagantly extolled, have been discarded at another. Schemes of philanthropy, from which incalculable benefits were

anticipated, have been found impracticable. The sybil that predicted the perpetuity of the Roman empire at the time when a few hovels only occupied its territory, and a few straggling robbers were all its population, seemed to be a genuine prophet, as in the days of Augustus and Antoninus, we see the traces of its dominion in every nation, and the shadow of its power encircling the whole circumference of the world; but in the progress of centuries, the Goth and the Vandal overturned its power, and laid all its boasted magnificence in the dust. It is pleasing to know that the religion of Jesus is not destined to share the fate which so many systems have undergone. On the contrary, bright as her triumphs have hitherto been, these are to be entirely eclipsed in the glory of those that yet await her. Beneficial as has been her agency hitherto, it is on a limited scale compared with that on which it is yet to be exerted, when all that enters into our most exalted ideas of philanthropy, knowledge, peace, equity, social happiness and political tranquility shall be universally diffused over our earth, and reaching far as the curse has penetrated and extending its influences wide as the empire of Jehovah, shall introduce into our world a brightness that no cloud shall obscure, and a serenity that no storm shall disturb, and finally transfer its reign to heaven, where holiness and love shall triumph for ever and ever.

Almost every step of the ground over which I am now very briefly to conduct you, has furnished subjects of ardent controversy. I have neither the leisure nor the inclination to enter upon these at present. Permit me then, to furnish you with a rapid sketch of some of the most interesting phases in the history of the church, from the present period to the time of its consummation, and to state them in the order in which they shall take place.

The first important event will be the *annihilation of the Roman Catholic Church.* This is distinctly revealed in the prophecies of Daniel and the apocalypse of St. John. The manner in which this anti-Christian system shall expire, differs from every other. Idolatry is to be supplanted by the light of the gospel, the prejudices of the Jew and the Mohammedan are to be subdued by a perception of the claims of the scriptures to be a revelation

from God; but Roman Catholicism is destined to expire in blood, by a combination of the enlightened nations of the earth, who shall regard her existence as no longer compatible with the liberties and social improvement of the human race. Her requiem shall be sounded, not in the accents of lamentation, but with the voice of joy and gratitude, "Babylon the great, the mighty is fallen." This bloody tragedy is a natural consummation to a church, of which ignorance, depravity and tyranny have been the invariable characteristics, that has so long held in thrall the nations of the earth, retarded the progress of knowledge, destroyed the saints of the most high, and impiously usurped the prerogatives of Jehovah. When this collision shall take place, which shall lead to the final overthrow, we cannot tell; it is impossible, however, to contemplate, unless with the liveliest apprehension, the prodigious efforts she is now making to appropriate this goodly heritage of ours, and convert the birth place of liberty, and the region of happiness into a gloomy receptacle of ignorance and intolerance. Let us not be deceived by her pretensions to liberality, nor dream that her spirit of malignity can ever depart from her; the rod of her persecution is now bruised — it is not broken; the flax of her intolerance is smoking, and not extinguished; the lion crouches, instead of tearing us to pieces, because his mouth is muzzled, and the spring of the bear is at present harmless, because his claws have been pared. But though it becomes us to be vigilant in guarding our liberties, and our religious privileges, we entertain no fears as to the result. Those who talk of Popery ever becoming the religion of the United States of America, notwithstanding the exertions of Jesuits, and the vast immigration of foreign Catholics, must be looking for such a convulsion as shall obliterate the present face of our country, and consign to oblivion all the heart-stirring recollections of its past history; for so long as our mountains, valleys and lakes are associated with the generous patriotism and valiant struggles of the fathers of our country to transmit the blood purchased inheritance of civil and religious liberty to their children's children, so long will Popery ever be regarded with emotions of inextinguishable reprobation, as alike

inimical to the well being of our species, and contrary to the mild and benevolent spirit of Christianity.

This will be followed by *the diffusion of the gospel among all the nations of the earth.* This work, vast as it may appear, and almost insuperable as are the obstacles to its accomplishment, will be effected by the instrumentality of the preached word and the blessed effusions of divine influence. Unlike Judaism, or other religions, whose peculiar institutions disqualify them for ever spreading far beyond the seat of their publication, Christianity, by the simplicity of her ceremonial and the spirituality of her moral code, is adapted to every clime and condition of society. "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the mighty deep." Though Mohammed have now more followers than the Nazarene, and the adherents of false gods be double the number of both, yet the gospel shall be diffused wherever there is an ear to hear or a heart to feel its influence; and renouncing their idols, and debasing superstitions, and believing in Christ as the only Saviour of sinners, "men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed."

Intimately connected with, and indeed preparatory to this, shall *be the conversion of the Jews.* This singular people, despised among the nations of the earth, who have inflicted upon them the most cruel persecutions, aliens under every government, isolated in their customs and interests, wherever they are found, and without the ephod, and oracle, and other distinctive badges of their national faith, yet multiplying amid all their miseries, surviving their enemies, and cherishing amid all their misfortunes a settled conviction that the star of their national prosperity, though often clouded is yet to appear, with a lustre and glory unsurpassed in any former period of their annals,—this singular people are destined to play a conspicuous part in the future history of the world. Of their restoration to the land of their fathers, we think that many passages of scripture which might be quoted, abundantly assure us. If any thing additional were necessary to corroborate it, it would be the present depopulated condition of Palestine. This country, which in the days of David and Solomon,

sustained some millions of inhabitants, is now almost a desert; only a few straggling Arabs, roaming in quest of plunder, seen hovering along its frontiers, and its villages, with but few exceptions, composed of miserable hamlets, where the inhabitants live in a state of the most lamentable destitution and ignorance. When the scattered remnant of Abraham, therefore, return to the land of their fathers, there are no territorial rights to disturb, no agrarian laws to invade, no injustice done to an organized community in forcibly ejecting them from their possessions, or vanquishing them by the terrors of the sword. "The Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Perizzite are not in the land" And what an impulse will be given to the energies of the Christian world, and how will infidelity, panic-struck, eye the total discomfiture of its system, when one of the most splendid, yet most unlikely of scripture prophecies has been fulfilled, in the long insulted and desolate standard of Judah, being again planted on the turrets and battlements of Zion. The Jews thus converted, will become the most efficient coadjutors in the blessed enterprise of evangelizing the world. In resigning to the Jew this position, we must forget the present obnoxious features of his character, or at least remember them only as the natural offspring of his peculiarly degraded condition. The homage universally paid to wealth has rendered him rapacious, his unjust treatment made him unsocial, and the disposition every where to over-reach, induced him in self defence to become practised in intrigue and duplicity. But when the curse of heaven is withdrawn, and the gospel sheds its mellowing influence over the Hebrew character, the Jews will become the most devoted, eloquent, and successful missionaries of the cross; their zeal for the law of Moses, diverted to a new object, will burn with a brighter flame, and over a wider territory, and their conversion striking the nations of the earth with astonishment, will secure to them a powerful influence wherever they are seen. Let us not therefore despond as if the conversion of the heathen world were an extremely remote event, when we look at the complicated instrumentality by which it must be effected. In the conversion of the Jewish nation, we shall have a host of fully disciplined mis-

sionaries conversant with the habits and languages of almost every nation of the earth; for wherever wealth is to be acquired, and commerce in its rudest state exists, there the Israelite is to be found, the man of ducats and shekels, of exchange and merchandize; in the island of Madagascar, at the base of the Himalayan mountains, in the mines of Mexico, or at the slave markets of Louisiana; amid the sands of Egypt, and the snows of Greenland. Thus shall they be admirably fitted for realising the glories of the latter day, "when many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased, and all nations be turned to the Lord." This interesting state of society shall be succeeded by the *millenium*, a period of a thousand years, when holiness, righteousness and peace shall signally prevail in our world. Whether Christ during this period is to reign personally upon the earth, or those passages which appear to sanction this opinion are to be understood in a spiritual sense, as descriptive of the influence of his gospel upon the hearts and consciences of men, is a subject of controversy on which we shall not here enter. During this auspicious period, the light of the gospel, like that of the sun in the heavens, shall encircle the nations of the earth; the Messiah shall be universally honored, and the blessed fruits of his gospel be every where visible; dissentions, anarchies and wars shall be succeeded by the reign of peace and love, treaties shall be sacredly observed, justice scrupulously maintained between man and man, in all the transactions of life, and the primeval happiness and bliss of our globe, almost revived, when Jehovah looked down upon it, and pronounced it very good. Hear the interesting revelations of scripture, Micah iv, 1-4.

At the expiration of this period, *impiety and vice are again to obtain the ascendancy.* During the period of the millenium, these were not exterminated, but only suppressed; though controlled by the influence of the gospel, they still lurked in our world, and had their abettors. At this time they shall again unhappily prevail; "Satan shall be loosed from his prison, and go forth to deceive the nations;" infidelity and vice shall anew desolate the face

of our earth, and men shall exclaim in contempt of the doctrines of scripture "where is the promise of his coming."

But while a sceptical generation shall deride as visionary the second advent of the Messiah, it shall burst upon them unexpectedly, like the deluge which destroyed the antediluvians, who despised the warnings of Noah. The great drama of the world is now to be wound up, the history of its many agitations and transactions shall now come to a close. The heavens are to be dissolved, the elements to melt with fervent heat, and a scene of retribution to commence, which is to fill eternity either with joys or sorrows. Hark! the trumpet sounds! the archangel proclaims that time shall be no more! arise ye dead and come to judgment. They rise, they all rise from the Egyptian pyramids, from the carnage of the battle field, the caverns of the ocean, the peak of the most elevated mountain, or the recesses of the darkest valley. Death is vanquished, the grave has not a solitary victim in its dominions. What an immense multitude! They fill the air, they crowd to the scene of judgment, they take their respective stations around it, for now a final and everlasting destruction shall be made between the two great classes of mankind. The blessed Jesus with the marks of the wounds which he received on Calvary, when he purchased the redemption of his saints, shall occupy the throne of judgment, and shall see of the travail of his soul, in the countless hosts who shall swell the triumphs of his train, and celebrate in anthems of ceaseless joy, the blessings of his matchless love. He pronounces the doom of interminable misery on his enemies, "Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," while his beloved people, whom he purchased on earth, he takes with him to inherit those mansions which he has prepared, where they shall be raised to a felicity and glory, wide as the capacities of their nature and infinite as the duration of their being. "Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

What a glorious consummation to the scheme of redemption!

Jehovah glorified in the highest; man redeemed; the theatre of rebellion honored by the residence of Immanuel and the scene of his blessed enterprise and triumphs; Satan baffled in all his schemes, and imprisoned with his confederate hosts in everlasting darkness; redemption in its unparalleled blessings, stretching wide as the curse has extended; distant worlds rolling in the immensity of space, learning the character of the Godhead, with blended emotions of reverence and love the blessed company of the redeemed, which no man can number, striking their golden harps, and in the sweetest notes of melodious song, celebrating with entranced and ever increasing emotions, the love of an incarnate God, while cherubim and seraphim shall mingle in the song, and ascribe unfeigned homage and praise to the Trisagion, the thrice holy incomprehensible essence.

I have thus endeavored to illustrate the theme which we announced at the outset, viz: Christianity in her past struggles, her present condition, her future prospects. The extensive nature of the subject has necessarily shut me up to a mere outline of these, and I have gained my object, if I have stimulated your curiosity, to expand it in the future researches of your private studies.

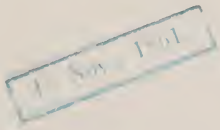
How interesting my friends, to trace the history of Christianity in our world! Her limited influence you will perceive, has been owing, not to any inherent want of energy, or principle of extension, of which she may be destitute, but to the passions and prejudices of the world. Some of these are rapidly disappearing. Legislators and philosophers now concede the inefficacy of every expedient save the Bible for the regeneration of society. Let us therefore, under a deep sense of our obligation to God for the blessings with which he has distinguished us, study to countenance every Christian effort, to diffuse the knowledge of divine truth at home and abroad. We embark in no Utopian enterprise. Our labors if we persevere shall be crowned with success. Let us in our several spheres consecrate ourselves to the service of God, and be fellow workers together with him in hastening forward those auspicious times, when Jewish incredulity, heathen superstition, and every form of error, both at home and abroad,

shall disappear under the benign influence of the gospel, and all nations shall be baptised into the service of the Messiah.

And you, my young friends, the hope of the church, and we believe destined to be her gifted and devoted servants, allow me again to congratulate you as aspirants to the pastoral office. "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." The baubles of ambition, the pageantry of rank, the feverish excitement of political strife, or even the tranquil pursuits of science, are bounded by the narrow circle of time, and respect man in the humblest and least important of his destinies; the labors of a minister of religion, on the contrary, embrace the essential elements of his being, and prepare him, under the blessed and purifying reign of the gospel on earth, for the presence of God, and the enjoyments of the heavenly world for ever. Cultivate by every possible means personal piety. Be not satisfied, unless with the most elevated standard of Christian character. Let the scriptures be the great text book to which your studies have now more than ever a special reference, and when you feel, as you often will, that you "lack wisdom, ask it of God who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." Some of you may be called to occupy arduous stations in the church, and your lives may be consumed in the incessant and often discouraging labors of your profession; but remember this world is not the scene of your reward, and if "ye be faithful unto the death, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away." Let the honors which Christ shall publicly confer on you at his appearing, reconcile you to all the hardships and privations of his service while here. "Then," to conclude in the words of an eloquent divine,* "then what a scene awaits you! In that illustrious day, when even the mighty achievements of Bacon, of Newton, of Milton, shall be consumed by the general conflagration, and scattered with the ashes of the globe; when the most splendid productions of human genius with all the choicest flowers of art, of literature and of science, shall serve but as a garland to deck the funeral pile of expiring nature, and leave the scholar and the artist without a ray of glory to dis-

*James.

tinguish them from the crowds which throng the bar of judgment; when the names of the legislators, warriors and philosophers that for thousands of years have emblazoned the annals of mankind, shall all be passed over in silence, then shall your names be announced to assembled worlds as having accomplished an immortal work; and when observing millions shall be waiting for the deed of renown, a glorified spirit dressed in the robes of righteousness, and arrayed in the garments of salvation, shall advance from the right hand of the Judge, followed by another, and another, and another, who, pointing to you with transports of delight shall exclaim, "Behold the ministers, to whose faithful labors under God we owe the salvation of our immortal souls." Then when the eye of the universe shall be fixed upon you, and the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters shall exclaim, rejoice over them ye heavens, the great master whom you serve will acknowledge all your labors with smiles of ineffable complacency, and words of mysterious condescension. "Well done, good and faithful servants, having approved yourselves in all things, ministers of God, enter ye into the joy of your Lord."



Christianity;

Its past struggles—its present position—its future prospects:

AN

ADDRESS,

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